

# **Republicans Deeply Divided Over Flawed, Unpopular Farm Bill**

*Instead of working in a bipartisan fashion to support America's farmers and address food insecurity, House Republicans have once again written a deeply flawed, unpopular Farm Bill that cuts vital nutrition assistance programs that keep 40 million Americans from going hungry; fails to support economic opportunity for rural America; and weakens environmental protections. As a result, a wide range of organizations are speaking out against this partisan bill:*

**National Farmers Union (NFU):** "The House Farm Bill (H.R. 2), as currently written, lacks the improvements needed to help farmers cope with continued low prices... The bill fails to provide farmers with the tools they need to be the best possible stewards of our natural resources, and it reverses progress toward expanding access to local, regional, and specialty markets. Furthermore, it makes unnecessary cuts to programs that feed hungry Americans. National Farmers Union's Board of Directors, on behalf of nearly 200,000 family farmers, ranchers, and rural members, opposes H.R. 2 in its current form..." [Release, [4/24/18](#)]

**Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:** "The nutrition provisions of the farm bill that the House Agriculture Committee (the Committee) passed on April 18, if enacted, would increase food insecurity and hardship. The proposed changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program... would end or cut benefits for a substantial number of low-income people. The Committee's proposal would reduce SNAP's effectiveness and put large numbers of families and individuals at increased risk of hardship... Coming just four months after a tax-cut bill that will cost \$1.9 trillion over ten years (including interest costs) and lavishes tax cuts on wealthy individuals and large, profitable corporations, the SNAP proposals would further widen the nation's economic divide." [Fact Sheet, [5/1/18](#)]

**The ACLU of Kentucky, Kentucky State AFL-CIO, Kentucky Nurses Association Kentucky, Association of Food Banks, and Kentucky Center for Economic Policy:** "One in seven Kentuckians has food on their table in part thanks to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The program lifts 164,000 Kentuckians, including 73,000 children, out of poverty. ... But this vital assistance is in jeopardy if Congress agrees to the \$17 billion in cuts to SNAP in the proposed Farm Bill. The proposal would create extremely restrictive work requirements, dangerous lock-out periods for up to three years, and expensive and burdensome administrative red tape that is likely to result in errors and loss of benefits. Vital food assistance will be put at risk for working Kentuckians and their families, children, seniors, Kentuckians with disabilities, veterans, students and more." [Northern Kentucky Tribune Op-Ed, [5/7/18](#)]

**The Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon Center for Public Policy, United Way of the Columbia-Willamette also spoke out against the bill's impact Oregon's inability to make up losses in nutrition assistance programs, if the Farm Bill is passed as-is:** "Organizations across Oregon are calling on U.S. Representatives to reject a Farm Bill that was passed yesterday by the U.S. House Agriculture Committee... If harmful SNAP cuts are implemented, private charities like Oregon Food Bank simply could not make up the difference.... Groups are calling on Congress to oppose this harmful bill and instead, work on a bipartisan basis to reduce hunger in Oregon and across the United States of America." [Oregon Food Bank, [4/19/18](#)]

*Press coverage has also pointed out that the nutrition assistance restrictions in the legislation are largely untested and underfunded:*

"House Republicans have proposed a massive expansion of an obscure job training program as a way to get millions of people off of food stamps ... There's just one problem: **There's little evidence the training program actually works, let alone that it can be scaled up quickly to enroll hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of new participants.** But standing up training capacity for as many as 3

million people so quickly would be roughly equivalent to building almost half the existing U.S. community college system from scratch, said Kermit Kaleba, director of federal policy at the National Skills Coalition... SNAP training programs, which are mostly voluntary, haven't been rigorously evaluated since 1994, according to USDA... With so many outstanding questions, some advocates see the House GOP plan as a high-risk gamble that risks cutting off aid that helps low-income people buy groceries each month." [Politico, [4/24/18](#)]

*Despite deep cuts to nutrition assistance, the bill still does not go far enough to satisfy Members of the Republican conference and many conservative organizations. As Republican leaders continue to whip the legislation, it's clear there are deep divisions on display, just as there were when they took a similar approach to the Farm Bill in 2013 and 62 Republicans voted against the bill, including 38 Republicans who are still in the House, such as Speaker Ryan, former Agriculture Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, and former House Freedom Caucus Chair Jim Jordan. This year, Republican leaders continue to face opposition:*

**"GOP House leaders have had trouble selling a bill simultaneously generous enough for struggling farmers and conservative enough for fiscal hawks.** Many conservative advocacy groups and lawmakers have balked at the cost of the federal safety net for farmers. The Republican Study Committee, a group of more than 150 conservative House Republicans, has called for cutting many commodity subsidies and shrinking taxpayer support for farmers' crop-insurance premiums in the group's budget." [Wall Street Journal, [5/6/18](#)]

**"Conservative groups are piling on against the House farm bill, underscoring the challenges confronting House Agriculture Chairman Mike Conaway as he seeks the GOP backing he needs to get it to the floor in May...** But the hard-line conservative faction of just under three dozen members has been noncommittal and uncharacteristically quiet since Conaway released his legislation last month. And the **increasingly vocal opposition from outside groups isn't helping the chairman's cause...** 'There's not a whole lot of excitement around this bill,' among GOP conservatives, Dan Holler, vice president of Heritage Action, said last week at a briefing for reporters." [Politico, [5/7/18](#)]

**Conservative organizations voicing opposition to the bill:**

- Americans for Prosperity
- Campaign for Liberty
- Competitive Enterprise Institute
- Coalition to Reduce Spending
- Club for Growth
- Council for Citizens Against Government Waste
- Freedom Partners
- FreedomWorks
- Heritage Action
- Independent Women's Forum
- Independent Women's Voice
- John Locke Foundation
- R Street Institute
- Rio Grande Foundation
- Taxpayers for Common Sense
- Taxpayers Protection Alliance

*At a time when we should be providing certainty and confidence to the agriculture community, House Republicans have attempted to appeal to their hardline Members with a partisan bill. Instead of tacking further to the right to win their support, Republicans ought to abandon this partisan exercise and work with Democrats on a bipartisan bill that can pass both chambers and be signed into law.*